

**Child Care Center ALERT!**  
2018

The purpose of this Alert is to highlight areas where the Division of Licensing has seen injury or harm to children and to offer suggestions on prevention. The suggestions do not replace rule and statute requirements. Please review this information and take precautions, including improving current procedures, orientation, and training. Additional information might be included in previous Alerts that is not included in this Alert. This and other Alert information are online at [www.dhs.state.mn.us](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us). To find them go to “General Public,” click “Licensing” in the drop down menu and then click “Maltreatment Investigations.” Under “Resources and Training” click “Maltreatment risk reduction (Alerts)”.

**Implementing these suggestions does not mitigate the license holder’s responsibility to ensure compliance with licensing rules and statutes. If an incident occurs, failure to address the topics in this Alert may contribute to findings of maltreatment under the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556). Findings of maltreatment at a center may result in the disqualification of one or more individuals and fines against the license holder.**

**BURNS/SUNBURNS:** The Division of Licensing has received reports involving burns to children from food, tap water, and sunburn.

- After cooking to the appropriate serve safe temperature, foods should be cooled to a safe temperature before being served to children. **Centers should develop policies and procedures defining temperatures at which food is safe to serve** and identifying the individuals responsible for ensuring that food is a safe temperature. The procedures should include methods to bring the food to a safe temperature and means of assessing whether food is at a safe temperature to serve to children. You can also refer to the American Burn Association website (<http://www.ameriburn.org/>) for temperature information.
- Tap water accessible to children should be maintained at or below 120°F and should be checked regularly with a thermometer as well as at any time a water heater is installed or repaired.
- The following may reduce the likelihood of burns from sun exposure and reduce the likelihood of heat exhaustion or heat stroke: Develop and implement written procedures to reduce the risk of injury from sun exposure; provide seasonal reminders to staff persons on the procedures; check the expiration date on sunscreen products; apply sunscreen prior to exposure to the sun; and reapply sunscreen at frequent intervals, especially when engaging in water play. Provide shaded areas for children when outdoors and adequate liquids for children to drink when playing outside during warm temperatures. Ensure that equipment surfaces are not hot enough to cause thermal burns to a child using the equipment. Even plastic or other non-metal surfaces can cause burns to a child.

**PLAYGROUND SAFETY:** The Division of Licensing has received reports involving injuries to children on playground equipment.

- The following may reduce the likelihood of playground injuries: Ensure surfaces around playground equipment are covered with a sufficient amount of material such as wood chips, mulch, sand, pea gravel, or safety-tested rubber-like material; ensure that protective surfacing extends at least six feet in all directions from play equipment; ensure play structures are spaced an adequate distance apart; check for dangerous hardware or sharp edges on equipment; and check equipment and playgrounds regularly to ensure they are safe and in good condition. Dirt or grass surfaces below playground equipment do not adequately protect children if they fall.
- Ensure that the playground equipment is age-appropriate for the children using the equipment. Children who are allowed to play on playground equipment designed for older children are at greater risk of injuries from falls.

- Visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) [website](#) to review information regarding the safety guidelines for playground equipment and additional consumer products. Click [here](#) for the CPSC “Public Playground Safety Handbook” to learn more about playground-related injuries and recommendations for equipment and surfacing practices.
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission also warns that children’s climbing equipment should not be used indoors on wood or cement floors, even if covered by carpet. Carpet does not provide adequate protection to prevent injuries.

**SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN:** The Division of Licensing has received reports involving children leaving child care centers without staff persons’ knowledge; children being left without supervision on playgrounds, in classrooms, hallways, and bathrooms; children being left unsupervised in community settings; and children leaving the group during outings or field trips.

The following may reduce the likelihood of such incidents:

- Develop procedures for taking attendance that involve matching each child’s name to the child present;
- Develop procedures for taking attendance more frequently during high risk times such as on field trips, in the community, and before and after transitions; and
- Provide training to staff persons on the implementation of these procedures.

**ALLERGIES:** The Division of Licensing has received reports regarding children receiving food that they are allergic to.

The following may reduce the likelihood of children’s exposure to food that they are allergic to:

- Create a protocol to ensure that children are not exposed to allergens and ensure that all staff persons are trained on the protocol;
- Ensure that allergy information is available at all times, including onsite, when on field trips, during transportation and in the area where food is prepared and served to children;
- Ensure that the facility is provided with prescribed medications such as an EpiPen© if the child has been prescribed epinephrine for allergies; and
- Provide training to staff persons on how to recognize symptoms and respond to a child having an allergic reaction, which may include information on how and when to use an EpiPen©.

Before admitting a child for care, a center must obtain documentation of any known allergy from the child’s parent or legal guardian or the child’s source of medical care. If the child has a known allergy, the center must maintain current information about the allergy in the child’s file and develop an individual child care program plan, as specified in [Minnesota rules, part 9503.0065, subpart 3](#).

**An important tool for prevention, orientation, and training to reduce injury and harm to children is the *RISK REDUCTION PLAN*.** Thorough development, training, and implementation of the *Risk Reduction Plan* required by Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.66, subdivision 2, may help reduce the likelihood of incidents of known risk to children including situations such as the above mentioned areas of supervision, prevention of burns, playground safety, and the following additional areas:

- Closing children’s fingers in doors
- Dislocation of children’s elbows
- Children falling from changing tables
- Children accessing dangerous items